

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release
May 23, 2006

Contact: Robert White
(202) 225-5074

Davis To Look at Hurricane Preparation

With Another Busy Storm Season Ahead, Are We Ready?

What: Government Reform Committee Oversight Hearing,
“Getting Ready for the ’06 Hurricane Season”

When: WEDNESDAY, May 24, 2006, 1:00 P.M.

Where: ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

Background: With federal forecasters predicting another unusually active Atlantic hurricane season, the House Government Reform Committee will take a look at the state of preparations by federal and local governments, businesses, and non-governmental organizations.

The 2005 hurricane season produced 28 named storms, including four category 5 hurricanes. Katrina, one of the most powerful storms ever to enter the Gulf of Mexico, caused unprecedented destruction to New Orleans and the Gulf coasts of Mississippi and Alabama.

Max Mayfield, director of the National Hurricane Center, announced on Monday that forecasters expect up to 16 tropical storms and up to 10 hurricanes. Mayfield has testified previously that the current period of heightened hurricane activity will continue for the next 10 to 20 years.

The final report of the House Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina – a special committee chaired by Congressman Davis – found that federal, state, and local governments were not prepared in multiple ways for the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Katrina striking the Gulf Coast. Despite the well-known consequences of a category 4 or 5 hurricane hitting New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast and highly accurate predictions and warnings in the days leading up to the storm, hundreds of thousands of

people were left stranded without adequate food, water, shelter, or medical care, and many feared for their personal safety, if not their survival.

The Select Committee found failures in evacuation planning and execution, communications operability, coordination between all levels of government and within each level of government. The Select Committee found that the Department of Homeland Security failed to activate key portions of the National Response Plan and used some of the authorities ineffectively. While the military played an invaluable role, there was poor coordination between active duty military troops and the National Guard and other responders. The Federal Emergency Management Agency lacked sufficient trained personnel to mount an effective response. Medical relief was delayed and lacked coordination. Food, water, and ice were delayed by a lack of prepositioning of needed supplies and an overwhelmed logistics system. Finally, private sector and nongovernmental assets were not sufficiently leveraged to support the response.

The ineffective response to Hurricane Katrina must not be repeated. While legislation is pending to reorganize FEMA and possibly move it out of the Homeland Security Department, those plans will not take effect for months. This hearing is intended to ensure that the nation is as prepared as it can be for the imminent hurricane season.

Witnesses:

Panel I

George W. Foresman, Undersecretary for Preparedness, Department of Homeland Security
Robert Shea, Acting Director of Operations, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security
Major General Terry L. Scherling, Director of the Joint Staff, National Guard Bureau, Department of Defense
W. Craig Vanderwagen, M.D. Assistant Surgeon General Department of Health and Human Services
Robert R. Latham, Jr. Chairman, Legislative Committee National Emergency Management Association
Walter S. Dickerson, Director, Mobile (AL) County Emergency Management Agency

Panel II

Joseph Becker, Senior Vice President for Preparedness and Response, American Red Cross
Maura Donahue, Chair, U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Patricia McGinnis President and CEO, Council for Excellence in Government

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